

# **A CASE STUDY OF STUDENT-TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN HONG KONG**

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In 1999 a critical thinking syllabus was issued by the education authorities to all junior secondary school English language teachers in Hong Kong. Different from the earlier curriculum guidelines, the syllabus highlights the importance of student thinking and of developing students' critical thinking through the subject. The requirement was then reiterated in the English Language curriculum for junior secondary education in 2002 and for the new senior secondary curriculum in 2007.

As pointed out by some local educators, the latest education reform has initiated a paradigm shift in the conception and teaching methodology of English and the latest curricular methodology calls for nothing less than a new interpretation of both teaching and learning in the local exam-oriented context. While genuine buy-in of teachers of the critical thinking syllabus is believed to be crucial in its successful implementation, some teachers complained that they had never been consulted regarding the syllabus.

This paper reports on a case study that investigated student-teachers' perceptions of the syllabus. Through an open-ended questionnaire, the study reveals that despite the importance of critical thinking that these novice teachers of L2 English perceived, their interpretations of the term varied significantly. Although they generally supported the idea of developing students' critical thinking, they had clear concerns about doing it through English language teaching and called for specific professional development. The research team hopes that the voices of these student-teachers are heard and the study facilitates exchanges of ideas and reflections on teachers' concerns and needs regarding critical thinking education.